



Suicide Prevention: A Resource for Teens

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

Mental health struggles and suicidal thoughts are common for many young people.

Suicide can be prevented. This guide is meant to help you recognize signs of mental health concerns in yourself or your friends. It will also show you how to have important conversations that can help you get the right support.



Watch for these Signs in Yourself and Friends

There is no single cause that leads to suicide. However, you should pay attention to any of these behavior changes in yourself or your friends.



Sudden increase in reckless behaviors



Significant changes in eating or sleeping habits



Isolating from family and friends



Extreme mood swings or irritability



Withdrawing from activities they used to enjoy



Increased alcohol and other substance use



Neglect of self-care or personal hygiene



Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself



Talking about being a burden to others, feeling trapped, or having no reason to live



Develop Online Awareness

Pay attention to what's happening online. If you find yourself or a friend posting troubling content, it may be a call for help. Be aware of negative or alarming posts similar to the following examples.

What is being posted or reposted?

If you see someone posting status updates, photos or videos that suggest emotional distress, consider reaching out.

- "I hate everyone."
- "I suck and can't do anything right."
- "I can't take this anymore."
- "No one cares about me."
- "I don't want to be here."
- "My life is terrible."

Are the pages and posts being followed promoting alarming behaviors?

Some platforms allow you to view friends' activity. If you notice a friend liking, commenting on, or following posts that promote negative behaviors, this may also serve as a warning sign.

The Power of Talking It Out

Starting a conversation with a friend can be awkward. If you don't know where to begin, try the tips below.

It's important not to judge or make assumptions. Sharing mental health struggles takes a lot of bravery and vulnerability. Try to be supportive: be there for them, and listen to what they have to say. Pay attention to your own limits when helping friends, and try not to feel bad about needing a break. If you don't take care of yourself, you will not be able to provide emotional support to others.





01

Create a safe and open space with conversation starters

Ask about their day

"How are things today?"

Start with an observation and offer your support

"Hey, I noticed you've been down lately. Can I do anything to help?" or "You don't seem like yourself. Do you want to talk about it?"

Reassure them they can trust you with anything shared

"You know I'm always here for you, right?"

Let them know you care about their health and safety

"It's okay if you don't want to talk to me, but it is important that you talk to someone."

02

Find the right moment

Check in via text or direct message

A simple "Hi!", is all it takes

Invite them to hang out

Chat over a bite to eat at their favorite spot

At school

Offer to share lunch time with them

On campus

Stop by their dorm and offer to walk with them to class

Talk while you're already hanging out

For example, while playing a video game or studying





Asking for Help is Just Plain Smart

If you are worried about yourself or a friend, talk with a trusted adult. They can help you find the right support, such as going to see a pediatrician, primary care clinician, or mental health professional. They have tools to help. If they ask about thoughts of suicide, it is not to offend or cause harm but to keep you safe.

When talking with a professional, be open and honest to be sure they have the information needed to help. Ask questions to make sure you understand and are okay with their suggestions.

Resources for Suicide Prevention

Crisis Text Line

Text TALK to 741741 for free, 24/7 support via text

988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline 24/7

Call or text 988 in a mental health crisis or visit 988lifeline.org

Trevor Project

Chat/call/text line for LGBTQ+ youth at thetrevorproject.org

Trans Lifeline

Peer support for individuals who are transgender. Call 877-565-8860 or visit translifeline.org

HealthyChildren.org by American Academy of Pediatrics

Information on supporting resilience and mental health in families

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

afsp.org/what-to-do-when-someone-is-at-risk